

Subcommittee on
**International Terrorism
and Nonproliferation**

Chairman Ed Royce, 40th District California

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Eric Cullen (202) 225.4111

March 30, 2006

**Statement of Representative Ed Royce
Chairman, Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation
"The Terrorist Threat from Shoulder-fired Missiles"
March 30, 2005**

WASHINGTON, DC -- Chairman Ed Royce issued the following statement today before the House Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation regarding the terrorist threat from shoulder-fired missiles:

Of growing concern to the United States, shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles, or MANPADS (man-portable air defense systems), have proliferated throughout the world. These weapons can be purchased on the black market at very low cost. More than two-dozen terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda, are believed to possess these easy to use and transport weapons. Under Secretary Robert Joseph recently testified before Congress that, "Other than stopping weapons of mass destruction, I personally do not think that there is, in the area that I work, a higher priority than keeping MANPADS out of the hands of the wrong people."

This Subcommittee too believes this threat to be very real. Last weekend, ABC News reported that last November, just after takeoff from LAX, an American Airlines pilot reported that a rocket had been fired near his jet. The FBI opened an investigation. The FBI concluded it was most likely a hobby rocket, but the investigation remains open.

Such an attack against a civilian airliner would have devastating human and incalculable economic costs. A 2005 study by RAND Corp. placed the economic costs of such an attack and the follow-on effects for one month at over \$70 billion. Impossible to calculate are the strategic consequences for the United States and its allies if al-Qaeda or an affiliate were able to carry out a successful attack against an airliner with a shoulder-fired missile. Such an attack would be sure to have a devastating impact on the American psyche, airline industry, and economy, while America's enemies would gain a tremendous psychological boost.

We need a multi-layered defense against this threat. Today, though, we will be focusing on the Small Arms/Light Weapons Destruction initiative, through which the State Department works to prevent terrorists from accessing MANPADS and other dangerous

weapons. Through the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement, the United States provides bilateral assistance to foreign governments to identify and destroy MANPADS stocks that are in excess of their security needs, as well as to improve the security of storage facilities for MANPADS retained by host governments. These efforts intensified after the failed shoulder-fired missile attack against an Israeli airliner in Mombasa, Kenya, in 2002.

It is often said that the best defense is a good offense. It makes sense to be proactive in this area -- going after these weapons at their source -- to diminish the threat. The personnel under Assistant Secretary Hillen, in the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement are energetic, approaching their work with a sense of purpose, knowing of this looming threat.

So I was disappointed that the Administration's budget request for this program in FY07 was relatively flat from last year's -- at \$8.6 million. It is within this context that the Ranking Member and I have drafted the "Shoulder-fired Missile Threat Reduction Act of 2006." This legislation aims to give Assistant Secretary Hillen and his Bureau the additional resources and authorities they need to help defend the United States against a direct threat to our national security.

We look forward to Assistant Secretary Hillen's comments on the legislation, and working with the other members of the Subcommittee to move this bill through the House.

###